

References

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Moxa for Breech Presentation



A Gentle Way to Turn Your Breech Baby

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ACT Yorkshire

ACT Yorkshire is a professional acupuncture group offering specialist treatment for fertility, pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal health. Members undertake post-graduate study in obstetric and fertility care, and meet regularly to develop best practice, explore the research base, provide peer support and maintain high standards of care. We are affiliated to ACT groups across the country and maintain links with international experts in the field. We aim to work compatibly with local midwives and doctors, and to build supportive healthcare networks for the benefit of our patients.

What is the evidence?

In 2008 a MIDIRS publication produced for midwives and women in collaboration with The Centre for Reviews and Dissemination stated that for women with a baby in breech presentation, the *“most promising alternative approach is moxibustion”* (MIDIRS 2008).i. And the obstetric acupuncture team at Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, has successfully provided moxibustion for breech within this NHS setting since 1989, with a version rate of 67% (Budd 2000 & Budd 2012).

Indeed, there is evidence from statistical modelling that moxibustion at week 34 of pregnancy followed by external cephalic version (ECV) at week 37 could reduce the number of breech babies at term by 78% and almost halve the number of c-sections needed (van den Berg 2010). A large-scale study would determine whether women be routinely offered moxa for breech (Coyle et al).

When is Moxa for Breech most effective?

Moxibustion is most effective weeks 32 to 35 of pregnancy. This is the optimal time. Much before this the baby moves about a lot due to its size. Much later than this, the baby has a decreasing amount of space available in which to turn. Twice daily moxibustion from week 36 can be effective, especially if this is a woman's second or third pregnancy.

What does Moxa for Breech involve?

It involves burning the herb *Artemesia vulgaris* (moxa) close to the skin to induce a warming sensation at an acupuncture point on the little toe (BL 67). The type of moxa used by ACT Yorkshire produces very little smoke and has a mild, pleasant smell.

Each toe point is warmed for 15 minutes each day for 10 days. Ideally this treatment is given by an acupuncturist at two appointments and by the woman's partner at home in between appointments; but it is possible to self-administer. Women typically note a significant increase in baby's movements part way through treatment and for some time following. They also report feeling relaxed and calm.

How safe is Moxa for Breech?

There is a risk of blistering the skin, but due attention reduces this risk significantly, especially when it is applied by a professional acupuncturist (Budd 2000; Ewies 2002). Women are encouraged to bring their partner to their first appointment to better ensure they give safe and effective treatment at home.

There are instances when moxa for breech is not an appropriate treatment for mother and baby. For this reason ACT Yorkshire practitioners take a thorough history at the initial consultation, refer to women's obstetric notes, and in complex cases will consult the midwife and doctor.

What if my baby is in Transverse or Shoulder presentation?

Between weeks 33 to 35 of pregnancy, this gentle treatment can also be used to encourage babies to move from a transverse presentation, or shoulder presentation, to a cephalic (head down) presentation (Li 1996).

Did you know Moxa and Acupuncture at BL67 encourages an Optimal position for birth?

If your baby is in a posterior or back-to-back position, with their head down but facing your tummy, birth is more difficult. Moxibustion and acupuncture from week 36 of pregnancy, and right up to birth, can help turn your baby into the optimal position – an anterior position, with their head down, facing your back and lined up so as to fit through your pelvis as easily as possible (Betts 2006).

